

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
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R 301130Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6873
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 5953

E.O. 11653: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, US
SUBJECT: SOVIET LEADERSHIP TIDBITS

1. SUMMARY. BREZHNEV HAS NOT BEEN SHOWN ON SOVIET TELEVISION FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, ALTHOUGH THE CULT OF BREZHNEV CONTINUES TO FLOURISH. RUSAKOV APPARENTLY HAS, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT, TAKEN OVER MANY OF KATUSHEV'S RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LIAISON WITH RULING CPS. KATUSHEV'S FUTURE REMAINS UNCLEAR, AS DOES THE MAKEUP OF RYABOV'S PORTFOLIO. END SUMMARY.

2. FILM CLIPS WERE SHOWN OF BREZHNEV ON SOVIET TV IN CONNECTION WITH THE ASSAD AND DAOUD VISITS AND ON THE OCCASION OF LENIN'S BIRTHDAY. BREZHNEV SEEMED CONCERNED TO SHOW THAT HIS HEALTH WAS NORMAL: MUCH OF GREY HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM HIS HAIR, WHICH WAS NEATLY SLICKED
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BACK; HIS ON-CAMERA MOVEMENTS SEEMED CALCULATED TO APPEAR RELAXED. HIS VOICE HAS NOT BEEN CARRIED ON RADIO OR TV SINCE HIS POOR PERFORMANCE AT THE TRADE UNION CONGRESS MARCH 21.

3. THE AFGHAN AMBASSADOR, NOT AN EXPERIENCED BREZHNEV-WATCHER, EXPRESSED "SHOCK" AT BREZHNEV'S POOR SHOWING

IN MEETINGS ON APRIL 12 AND 13. THE AFGHAN AMB REPORTED THAT BREZHNEV HAD SERIOUS DIFFICULTY TALKING, SEEMED CONFUSED AT TIMES, AND CLEARED HIS THROAT WITH ABNORMAL FREQUENCY.

4. THE LATEST MANIFESTATIONS OF THE CULT OF BREZHNEV: AN APRIL 26 TASS ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT A MUSEUM AT THE FACTORY WHERE LEONID IL'ICH BEGAN HIS WORKING CAREER; A TASS ITEM APPEARING IN IZVESTIYA APRIL 27 AND IN PRAVDA APRIL 28, ANNOUNCING THAT THE GENERAL SECRETARY HAD BEEN PRESENTED A MEMBERSHIP CARD IN THE UNION OF JOURNALISTS; ANOTHER TASS PIECE (PRAVDA, APRIL 29, ANNOUNCED THAT WORKERS OF THE ZIL FACTORY HELD A MEETING TO COMMEMORATE LEONID IL'ICH'S VISIT THERE LAST YEAR.

5. IT SEEMS NOTEWORTHY THAT TASS REVISED ITS FIRST VERSION OF THE UNION OF JOURNALISTS PRESENTATION. ON THE 5:00 PM TV NEWS APRIL 27 AND IN IZVESTIYA THAT EVENING TASS EMPHASIZED THAT BREZHNEV RECEIVED TICKET NUMBER TWO, THEN EXPLAINED THAT FOLLOWING A LONG TRADITION, TICKET NUMBER ONE WAS ISSUED TO V.I. LENIN. IN CONTRACT, THE 9:00 P.M. TV NEWS APRIL 27 AND PRAVDA APRIL 28 DROPPED REFERENCE TO THE NUMBER OF BREZHNEV'S CARD. APPARENTLY, BETWEEN 6:00 P.M. AND 9:00 P.M. APRIL 27, SOMEONE IN AUTHORITY DECIDED IT WOULD NOT DO TO RELEGATE LEONID IL'ICH TO NUMBER TWO POSITION, EVEN IN DEFERENCE TO "THE GREAT LENIN". SOMEWHAT CURIOUSLY, THERE WAS NO TV FILM OF THE PRESENTATION CEREMONY, NOR WAS A TASS PHOTO OF THE EVENT
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CARRIED IN THE PRESS APRIL 28.

6. THAT RUSAKOV WAS ON THE CPSU DELEGATION TO THE PRAGUE MEETING OF 75 PARTIES, AND KATUSHEV WAS NOT (PRAVDA APRIL 27), FURTHER INDICATES THAT THE FORMER MAY REPLACE THE LATTER AS CC SECRETARY RESPONSIBLE FOR LIAISON WITH RULING CPS. OPINIONS CONTINUE TO VARY HERE ABOUT KATUSHEV'S FUTURE. THE POLISH AMBASSADOR RECENTLY TOLD AMBASSADOR TOON THAT KATUSHEV'S APPOINTMENT AS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' DEPUTY CHAIRMAN WAS NOT A DEMOTION, ALTHOUGH KATUSHEV COULD NOT HOLD BOTH JOBS AND PROBABLY WOULD SURRENDER HIS SECRETARIAT SEAT. WE UNDERSTAND SOVIETS ON THE CEMA SECRETARIAT ARE TAKING THE LINE THAT KATUSHEV'S APPOINTMENT AS CEMA REPRESENTATIVE IS A BOOST FOR CEMA AND CERTAINLY NOT A MINUS FOR KATUSHEV PERSONALLY.

7. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PRC CHARGE RECENTLY TOLD US THAT IT LOOKED AS IF KATUSHEV HAD BEEN DEMOTED. OUR

PRC SOURCE ADDED THAT WHILE BREZHNEV COULD NOT CHALLENGE HIS CHIEF POLITBURO FOE SUSLOV DIRECTLY, BREZHNEV COULD HARM SUSLOV'S MORE JUNIOR SUPPORTERS. THE CHARGE PREDICTED THAT ZIMYANIN'S STANDING WOULD BE REDUCED IF NOT BY THE NEXT CC PLENUM THEN BY THE FOLLOWING ONE, ALTHOUGH THE CHARGE DID NOT EXPLAIN HOW THIS WOULD COME ABOUT.

8. ACCORDING TO ONE RECENT BUT UNSUBSTANTIATED RUMOR (THE FRG EMBASSY SAYS IT HAS BEEN TOLD BY "A GOOD SOURCE," PRESUMABLY SOVIET), A CC PLENUM WILL BE HELD SHORTLY AFTER MAY 10. EASTERN EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS ARE PREDICTING THAT A MAY CC PLENUM WILL DEAL PRIMARILY WITH THE NEW 15-YEAR PLAN.

9. GIVEN EARLIER INDICATIONS THAT RYABOV HAD TAKEN OVER USTINOV'S SECRETARIAT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE CONFIDENTIAL

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DEFENSE INDUSTRY, WE WERE SURPRISED TO NOTE (PRAVDA APRIL 19) THAT RYABOV RECEIVED A CZECH CP DELEGATION CONCERNED WITH SCIENCE AND EDUCATION. THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE ZIMYANIN'S FIELD, AND IT MAY SIMPLY BE THAT ZIMYANIN WAS TIED UP THAT DAY.
TOON

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